derived from German and Austrian sources. The deficiency had to be made up by sea-carried supplies from Britain. Italy had during the War over half a million tons gross of British shipping set aside for supplying her needs. About 45 per cent. of her total imports, and 75 per cent. of her coal supplies were carried to her in British ships. And 300,000 tons gross of neutral tonnage was reserved for her service by us through the exercise of our control over bunker supplies.

While our shipping was thus called on to bear a wide range of additional burdens, the War led to a considerable restriction of the available

Reduction of Tonnage

tonnage. The German Mercantile Marine, the second largest in the world, was bottled up in Germany, or, where it had not been captured by us, interned in neutral harbours. Enemy action by submarines, mines and surface raiders, was steadily cutting down the total of available shipping, both Allied and neutral. Shipbuilding, owing to the need for turning the energies of our yards to naval demands, fell heavily, and the Board of Trade did not take steps in time to safeguard the interests of mercantile shipbuilding by checking the recruitment of skilled workers and by reserving a fair share of the berths in the yards for merchant ships. Moreover, whilst the demand for shipping increased and the number of available ships diminished without prospect of replenishment, the ships that

were left
could not make as many voyages as usual owing to
War conditions. The necessity of precautionary
measures to avoid danger zones, which led to devious
routing and to the continual holding-up of vessels when
a raider or submarine was believed to be operating
in the neighbourhood, had the result of making
voyages take much longer, so th^t the services which